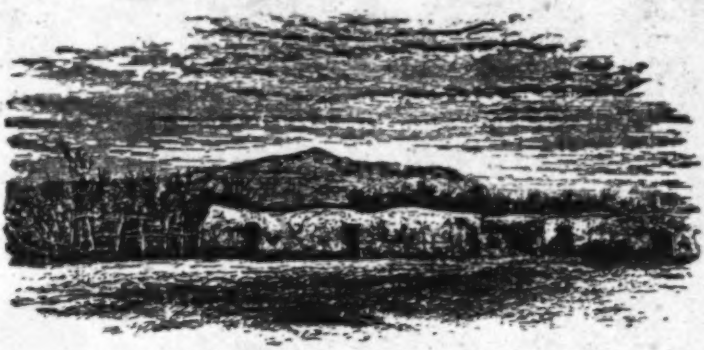
6: Thomson K-3 (1883-1884)1887
FL12 Masai FL12



844 the hut were gathered together the gossips of the kraal, mingling, so far as space permitted, with calves and goats. [845] A number of large calabashes lay in one corner, and a coarsely-made earthen cooking-pot in another. Fleas in thousands skipped about, and the midwives had their time well taken up with the myriads of flies which pertinaciously would insist on cultivating personal intimacy with them.

The anticipated event passed over safely. Indeed, the whole affair was hardly thought worthy of remark, except on the part of the mother, who heard with deep pleasure that her [842] offspring was a boy. Girls are sadly at a discount among the Masai. They would always prefer to have boys, but happily nature sees ahead a little, and takes care that a fair

[133] [342]



MASAI KRAAL, DONYO LONGONOT IN DISTANCE.

supply of girls is provided. As there is no registrar or birth column, I am totally unable to state when our hero first saw 846 the light. That, however, is a small matter. No particular 852 ceremonies marked the occasion, and the happy mother was about next day, attending to her household duties as if nothing unusual had happened, the little stranger being warmly ensconced on her back beneath the bullock's hide which formed the mother's garment.

● 855 Babies are babies everywhere, and for the first year or two the embryo warrior grappled with the problem of life like a philosopher as he sucked his mother's milk. Then he spoke. Having next found his legs, he grew space. Getting above mother's milk, he was soon exercising his incipient teeth on a huge chunk of beef. Now this was a very reprehensible indulgence on the part of our young friend, for it doubtless

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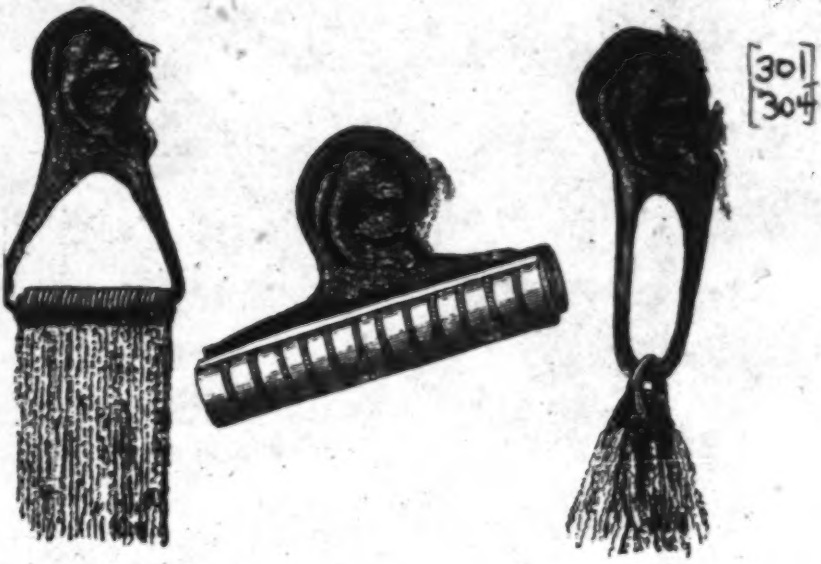
produced that unpleasant setting of the teeth which belongs to him in common with the whole of his race. The gums being tender, and the beef tough and leathery, the teeth acquired an outward projection unpleasant to behold, and, what was still worse, they seemed to become separated from each other, till they appeared as isolated fangs. It was noticeable also that his gums were of a very dark blue colour. Neither of these characteristics, however, were any disad-



EAR STRETCHER AND EAR ORNAMENTS.

vantage to the young Masai, as in his country to be hideous is to be beautiful.

As a boy Moran—for such we may call him for convenience' sake—was pleasing in the extreme—when his mouth was shut. He was the very ideal of an imp, and for diabolical versatility would doubtless have made an admirable page, such as were so much in vogue in former times. At a very early age Moran broke away from his mother's apron-strings, and with miniature bow and arrow aped the bigger boys in their play. As he had no linen to soil, he only roused his mother's laughter if he turned up encrusted with filth. He

6: Thomson K-3 (1883-1884)1887
FL12 Masai FL12



was not even put through the horrors of the tub. Sometimes, however, his mother, in a fit of affection, and imbued with the belief that some day he would make a name for himself as a smasher of skulls and a lifter of cattle, would make up an unctuous and odoriferous composition of grease and clay, and anoint him therewith till he shone forth with a splendour dear to the Masai heart. On these occasions he would strut forth with all the pride proper to a small boy who has just had a suit of new clothes.

And so life went on, and he was promoted to the rank of a boy proper. He was provided with a real bow and arrow. A square piece of sheep-skin was tied over the left shoulder, leaving the legs quite bare. He now began to cultivate, not a moustache, but his ear-lobes; that is to say, he took means to stretch them out till they would almost touch his shoulder, and he could nearly put his fist through the distended portion. This is done by first putting a slender stick through the lobe, and gradually replacing it by a bigger, till a piece of ivory six inches long can be inserted lengthwise.

Our hero now looked longingly forward to the day when he should be a warrior; but meanwhile he must employ himself herding the goats and sheep. This was his first occupation. He had by this time acquired some notion of the geography of the country around, as his parents had not been stationary, having been compelled to move about from place to place according to the pasturage. The donkeys on these occasions conveyed their household gods, though his mother had to carry nearly as much, and build the hut after. He had also to accompany his parents in moving up from the plains to the highlands in the dry season and *vice versâ* in the wet season. Beyond these studies in practical geography his education proceeded in a very irregular fashion. He learned something of the mystery of the universe by hearing his elders continually howl out prayers by the hour together to some unseen Being called Ngăi (God, or the heavens). He heard also that the place of Ngăi was among the eternal snows of Kilimanjaro, or that the thunders of Donyo Ngăi (an active volcanic mountain) were His voice.

It is very pleasing to think of Moran at this period reclining under a bush or standing watchfully over his flock with one foot brought up to his knee and supported by his bow, trying to penetrate the great problem as to the where, whence, and whither of life. We can imagine him appeal-

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1. The Masai give this name to the inhabitants of the Umbugwe area on the southern end of Lake Manjara.

during an attempted livestock raid.

861 The child is probably never beaten before it is at least two years old. But even at an older age beatings are very rare and then never cruel. Boxing the ears or blows on the head are generally forbidden because they might injure the health. If correction is necessary, [292] the mother -- and, to be sure, only she -- strikes the child rather lightly on the training surface with the belt that she wears after each confinement.

• 855 As soon as the children are weaned, they are left to themselves the whole day and, appear in the maternal hut only for eating, drinking, and sleeping. They develop rapidly, are lively, bright, and often quite pretty, if their faces are not marred by running eyes. The latter is very common, for the countless flies in the kraals prefer to settle on the nostrils and eyes of the children. It is only natural that they quickly lose their childish innocence, if one pictures the 857 life that surrounds them. There is a time, however, when they still 524 enjoy naiveté and amuse themselves with childish games. Little girls like to play with dolls or also "cooking." A foot-long fruit of the Kigelia aetiopica, similar to a liver sausage in appearance, is the doll. Sometimes it is carried on the back, sometimes held at the breast, then anointed with water or earth, in place of fat, or, with the assumption that it is crying, rocked in the arms or on the back. For cooking, they make themselves small clay pots out of the clay of the termite hills, place them on three small stones, and fill them with grass and leaves, which are supposed to represent their favorite foods. They also imitate the grinding of flour by rubbing sand between two stones. With the fruits of the Solanum campylacanthum they play at catch in twos or by turns, whereby the one who drops the "ball" must let the other drink a couple of swallows of milk out of his gourd bottle. Boys and girls also play "husband and wife"